

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

DESIGN ENHANCEMENTS



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A Quarterly Newsletter by the Public Art & Design Enhancement Program
Public Works, City Architect's Office / P.O. Box 839966 / S.A., TX 78283-3966

SOUTH PRESA'S ENHANCEMENT PLANS PRESS AHEAD

On March 5, 2003, the Historic Design Review Commission granted final approval of design enhancements for the Public Works' Southtown Street Improvements Project. The project is located just south of downtown along South Presa Street and it integrates innovative designs from local artist Ann Wallace.

Enhancements impact sidewalks of three South Presa Street triangular "pocket parks". These open spaces are well utilized as meeting places, bus stops, and as thoroughfares for pedestrians in route to their place of work or to shop. It was a priority of the artist to have the project's designs address the community's past and present. The neighborhood was once home to the historic O'Henry House that was located at 903 S. Presa Street. And, before construction was put in place for the 1968 HemisFair, Southtown was known for its seamless and unobstructed flow of pedestrians traveling into downtown for work and pleasure.

The design concept for the project was to imprint the history and legacy of this area through a technique that was once the maker's mark used widely in San Antonio's



Left: Anne Wallace's computer rendering of an enhanced South Presa Street sidewalk.

Left & Right: Samples of old maker's marks on San Antonio sidewalks.

existing sidewalks dating back to the late 1800's. Wallace plans to utilize the artisan tradition of imbedding and/or stamping text and patterns into wet concrete sidewalks. Along with the stamp treatment will be a group of nine pre-cast and photoengraved concrete slabs that will

be placed near the sidewalks and were created using historic photographs. The unique enhancement treatment preserves handcrafted touches of the past and presents it in an attractive and accessible way.

To collect the appropriate text and images for the project, the artist sought out oral histories and rare photographs from the area and received input from meetings of the Lavaca Neighborhood Association. Other important resource materials for the project were researched through the Institute of Texan Cultures and the San Antonio Public Library. Champak Sadhu, project engineer with Weston Solutions, assisted the artist throughout the design process, including leading presentations made to the Public Art Committee, HDRC and City staff. The end result is a project that compiles the personal stories and images of a community into a lasting part of the neighborhood infrastructure.

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Project News

RAINBOW HILLS COMMUNITY CENTER: SPORTY ENHANCEMENTS



Artist Jack Robbins has designed a mural component using tesserae mosaic tiles for an installation inside the new Rainbow Hills Community Center.

The new Parks and Recreation Department Rainbow Hills Community Center is set to replace existing facilities for the park areas located at the corner of Rasa and Hunt on the city's far west side. The 6,000 square foot community center was designed by Debra Dockery Architects and is intended to provide a much-needed space for extracurricular activities such as sports and games. The project architects worked with selected local artist Jack Robbins to identify and integrate attractive and functional enhancements for the Parks facility's interior and exterior design needs.

The design collaboration worked to satisfy the public demand for a more community-based theme for the Center that related back to the users of the park, to the center's services, and to the history of the site location. With this in mind, Mr. Robbins designed four limestone bas-relief panels (16" X 16" X 2 1/4") for placement at the east and west exterior entrances and designed an interior mosaic tile component (12 1/4" x 11') made from tesserae (a mosaic technique using colorful natural stones, such as marble and slate). Both enhancement components fit in with the overall design of the new facility and depict icons relating to sports, history, and music. Robbins chose to work with stone and mosaics due to the fact that stone masonry played a significant role in Rainbow Hills' history.

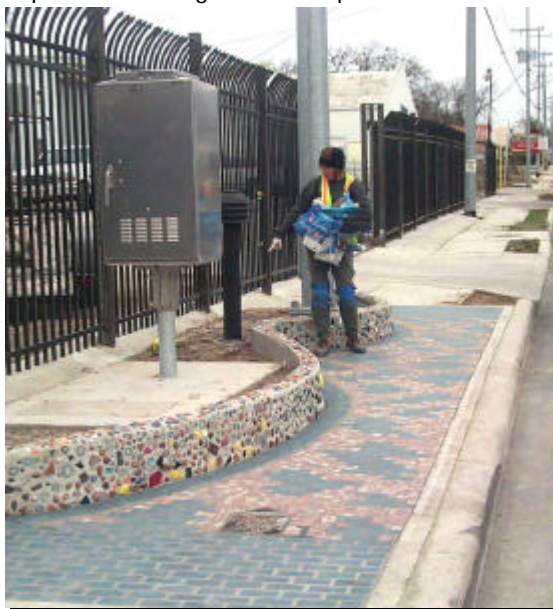
Project News

"ROSA PARKS WAY" /E. HOUSTON STREET ENHANCEMENTS

Residents and travelers along newly completed portions of East Houston Street are recognizing three initial installations of an exciting and important design enhancement project that beautifies and enhances the Eastside Community. When completed, a total of eleven enhancement locations will be improved along East Houston Street between Pine Streets and Polaris. This stretch of Houston Street was proclaimed "Rosa Parks Way" by City Council in 2001. Project artist, Twyla Arthur, chose to support and recognize the communities proclamation and further identifies "Rosa Parks Way" through several features of the sidewalk design.

The public art enhancements are integrated into the City of San Antonio/Texas Department of Transportation Street and Sidewalk Reconstruction Project, which includes converting the E. Houston into three lanes with an alternating center lane designed to relieve the

street's increased traffic congestion caused by the new SBC Arena. The enhancement locations were chosen to improve and soften the impact of mid-block directional



Twyla Arthur shows features of her mosaic tile installation on E. Houston St., Jan. '03.

signals that are mounted on mast arm poles and accompanied by large metal maintenance boxes. The artist's challenge, and that of project engineers, Lockwood, Andrews & Newman, Inc. was to minimize the presence of the poles and boxes for residents and pedestrians by adding attractive pavers and tiles in the sidewalks. The initial installation includes three enhancements sites with: a) installed tile mosaics and found objects imbedded into treated curb walls, b) hand laid installation of colorful pavers, and c) the placing of handcrafted "Rosa Parks Way" directional plaques at each site.

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The low curb walls were designed to serve as a buffer between the pedestrian sidewalk area and the signal poles and boxes. The top and outward face of each curb wall will be clad with unique stones, tile pieces, and colorful found objects. At the base of the curb wall will be a line of text that chronicles Rosa Parks' life and is to be inlaid using tile. The walking areas of the sidewalk will be a mosaic installation of colorful porcelain paver tiles laid out in brick and mosaic patterns. Each enhancement location will utilize a different color scheme and pattern from the next.

Adding to the natural beauty and color of the artist's mosaics and pavers is an opportunity for attractive plantings to be included behind each curb wall. Planting varieties such as Mountain Sage, Ceniso, Lantana or other species are suggested for their attractiveness and low maintenance needs. Four-foot tall light bollards are placed inside the curb wall to illuminate the paving and planting areas. The illumination provides improved visibility along the pedestrian pathway and addresses community concerns for safety, minimizes vandalism, and adds to the overall aesthetic enhancement of E. Houston Street for residents and passersby alike.

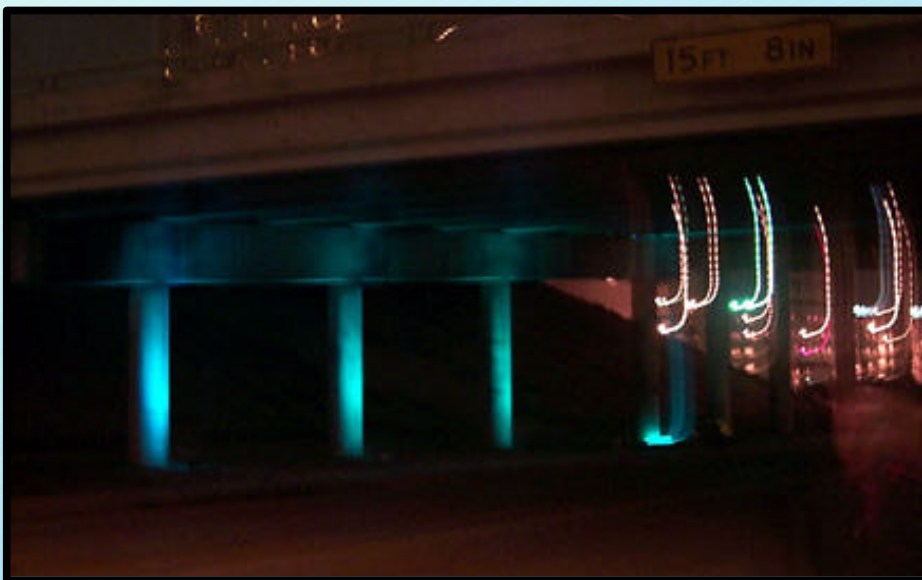
Community involvement is being coordinated for East Houston Street residents and community leaders to review the artist's approach to chronicling the life story of Rosa Parks, and to ensure resident support for plantings and maintenance concerns. Ms. Arthur's concept for the mosaic text is to utilize Rosa Parks' autobiography written for children, entitled *My Story*. In the coming months coordination will continue on final



installation plans of the enhancement project. Residents and interested citizens will be invited to attend community workshop sessions regarding final treatment of text placement and other matters. The remaining eight installations will be incorporated with the general contractor work being done for phase 2 of the street and sidewalk project scheduled to resume later this year.

Project Update:

INTERSTATE 37 UNDERPASSES ARE UNDER DESIGN

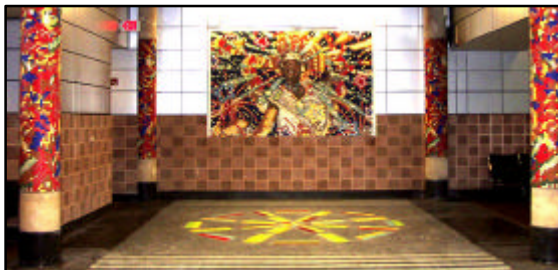
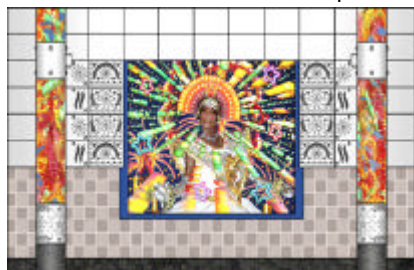


L.E.D. LIGHTING DEMONSTRATION

February 19, 2003 Public Works and the Texas Department of Transportation invited local artist, Bill FitzGibbons, to demonstrate new built-environment applications in Light Emitting Diode technology. An effort is underway by both agencies to develop creative enhancements for Interstate Highway 37 bridges over Houston Street and Commerce Street. Enhancements planned for the project include cleaning of existing infrastructure, painting, landscaping, and other pedestrian enhancements that focus on improving the public experience and usage of the east/west underpasses.

Newsletter Notes:

★ Installation of **Cesar Martinez's** twelve portal murals are underway as part of design enhancements integrated into the terminal renovations taking place at the **San Antonio International Airport**. The rendering (below left) shows the artist's final design drawing for "Fiesta Portal". The actual installation photograph (below right) shows the completed work to date, including terrazzo floors, tiled columns, decorative metal panels, and a tile mural.



★ Other projects with design enhancement project installations underway are the **Building And Development Services Center** that features a mural project by local artist **Angel Rodriguez-Diaz**, entitled "Birth of a City".

★ And, in May '03, installation should be completed on the **Northeast Service Center's** way-finding and signifier enhancement project created and tooled by **Riley Robinson**. The artist's galvanized "Wrench benches" and "Tool Yard" are designed to provide northeast community users of the center's conference space a recognizable and accessible signifier feature, as well as to help visitors to the center better distinguish gate entrances for crew service or administrative entry.

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Teresa Cisneros, Program Mgr.

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Department of Public Works
City Architect's Office
Design Enhancements Newsletter
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

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James LeFlore, **Design Enhancements**, Public Works' City Architect's Office, P.O. Box 839966, San Antonio Texas 78283-3966. Call (210)-207-4433. Fax (210)-207-4418 or email to jlefllore@sanantonio.gov or go online to: www.sanantonio.gov/publicworks/pubart